

Robert L. Bradley

# Pemaquid National Historic Landmark

*Bellarmine  
stoneware jug*

**N**estled on a rocky peninsula adjacent to a small harbor in the mid-coast region of Maine is the site of Colonial Pemaquid, one of the nation's earliest and most historically-significant 17th-century settlements. This extinct fortified village, from its murky beginnings to its inglorious demise, was to play a dramatic role as New England's northeasternmost outpost, facing the French in Acadia.

Captain George Waymouth, an English explorer reconnoitering the Maine coast for potential settlement sites, visited the place briefly in the summer of 1605. Two years later the name Pemaquid was first recorded when members of the Popham Expedition landed there on their way to founding an ill-fated settlement at the mouth of the Kennebec River, just a few miles to the west. Captain John Smith of Jamestown fame noted it in 1614 as the site of a seasonal English trading ship's base, and soon thereafter it probably saw similarly seasonal fishing and fish-processing. There is evidence that a year-round settlement was established in 1625, though the earliest sur-

living land patent gives 1628 as the official founding date of a permanent community.

Early Pemaquid prospered and grew quickly, its economy based on agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, and fur trade with the Native Americans. An indicator of this growth is the £500 worth of "goods and provisions" which the English pirate, Dixy Bull, is reported to have carried off from Pemaquid in 1632. Another dramatic incident occurred three years later, when the ship "Angel Gabriel," carrying West Country immigrants, sank at Pemaquid in the great hurricane of August 1635, fortunately with little loss of life.

Prosperous though Pemaquid was in the mid-17th century, it had never been provided proper defenses, and it therefore had to be quickly abandoned when the first of a long series of frontier wars broke upon mid-coast Maine in 1676. A year later the site was resettled and provided with a wooden defensive work called Fort Charles. All seemed well until 1689, when Native Americans attacked the village and accepted the fort's surrender. After a brief hiatus in Anglo-American occupation of the area, the first English stone fort built in New England, Fort William Henry, was erected in 1692. Just how important Pemaquid was perceived as a strategic bulwark to protect southern New England is evidenced by the fact that the £20,000 cost of this fort amounted to some two-thirds of the entire Massachusetts Bay budget for that year.

Despite Royal Governor Sir William Phips' boast that it was "strong enough to resist all the Indians in America," in 1696 it surrendered to a force of Native Americans with French support. Among its many design faults was the location of its well for drinking water—outside the walls of the fort. The loss of Fort William Henry was a severe psychological blow to the region, which thereafter for a generation was abandoned by Anglo-Americans.

Pemaquid was not repopulated until 1729, when a settlement of Scotch-Irish immigrants was established and the stone fort was re-erected and named Fort Frederick. A land dispute led to the eviction of most of the settlers in 1732, but from



*Colonial Pemaquid.  
Photo by Nicholas  
Dean.*

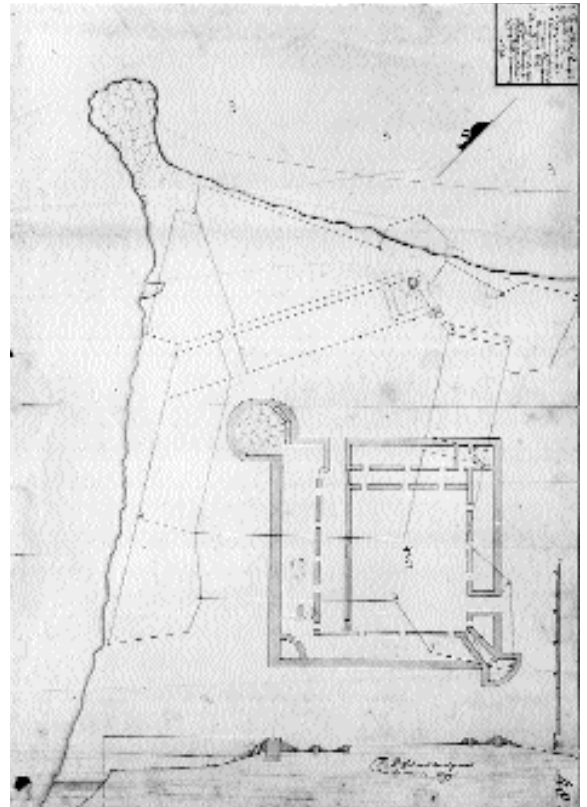
then until 1759 the fort was garrisoned by Massachusetts militia. As the frontier wars ebbed and New England gradually pressed northward and eastward, Pemaquid lost its long-standing strategic significance, leading to the inevitable decommissioning of Fort Frederick. Well before the Revolution the site of the successive settlements and their forts became a farm and sheep pasture, an anti-climactic end to the most turbulent of histories.

This end, however, was a gift to Americans today, for no city grew up on the site to devastate its buried structures and associated artifacts. In fact, Pemaquid made a remarkable transition in the human mind from being a military outpost to being an historical shrine in the space of just 36 years, when in 1795 Maine's first great historian, James Sullivan, noted the site's dramatic history and the physical remains of both the settlements and the forts. The next major writer, William Williamson, made the point even more emphatically in 1832, and in 1836 the popular press focussed its attention on Pemaquid's history and remains. This attention continues to this day.

Sadly, beginning in 1836, all too many popular articles and books have been published which contain wild assertions about Pemaquid's history, a phenomenon which continues to this day. Suddenly, Pemaquid's history became shrouded in mystery, its beginning and ending dates unknown,

Col. Wolfgang William Romer's 1699 plan of the ruins of Fort William Henry, Pemaquid. Photo courtesy of British Public Record Office.

Excavations of Ft. William Henry Officers Quarters.



the origin of its settlers unfathomable. The Vikings had to have settled there; certainly 16th-century Spanish and Portuguese; and don't forget a pre-English German colony, or was it French? Whatever, Pemaquid was surely the first European city in the New World. At least it far predated Plymouth, didn't it? A children's book of 1992 claimed that fact, and also claimed that Pemaquid featured America's first paved streets.

Fortunately, over the century and a half in which this loud fiction has paraded as fact, generations of dedicated amateurs and professionals have studied Pemaquid's history and archeology in order to present the truth (which is, after all, an exciting enough story). In 1869 and 1871, the Maine Historical Society mounted pilgrimages to the site. In 1873, the first major history of the site was published. In 1890, local antiquary John Henry Cartland promoted the site's importance in the colonial history of New England. By 1909, the State of Maine owned the site of the forts and had faithfully reconstructed the great western bastion of the 1692 fort as a monument and museum. In 1923, Warren K. Moorehead tested parts of both the settlement and fort sites to find traces of a Viking presence. He found none. Beginning in 1965 Helen B. Camp excavated parts of the settlement site, leading to its purchase by the State in 1969. And from 1974 to 1980, Camp and I excavated superimposed ranges of officers' quarters of 1692 and 1720. More recently, field survey has

focussed on satellite sites of both centuries along the Pemaquid River, putting the core settlements and their forts in their larger context. The history of research at Pemaquid is almost as long and interesting as the colonial history of the community.

By the end of 1969, only a handful of Maine properties were listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Among them were Fort William Henry (December 1, 1969) and the Pemaquid Restoration and Museum (December 2, 1969). The former comprised the site of the two stone forts, while the latter covered the site of the successive settlements. On December 22, 1978, the Colonial Pemaquid Archaeological District was listed in the Register. This was meant to combine the two earlier nominations, to reach out to more distant satellite sites on the Pemaquid River drainage, and to provide much more detailed and up-to-date information in the statements of Description and Significance. At the time it was

hoped that at some point the Department of the Interior would consider the site of the core settlements and the forts for National Historic Landmark designation.

This hope was realized when I collaborated with Robert S. Grumet in including Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site among the Contact Period sites of the Northeast to be considered for this distinction. National

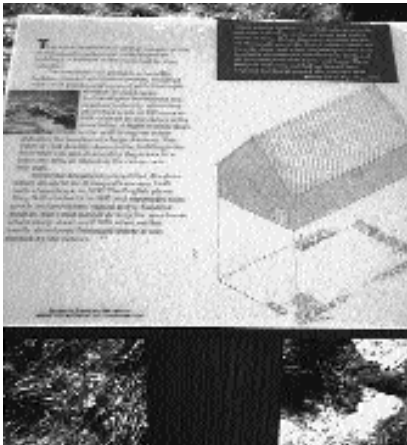
Historic Landmark designation came on April 12, 1993.

Colonial Pemaquid qualified for this status for a number of reasons. Although much of the site of the settlements had been excavated in 1923 and between 1965 and 1973, large areas remain untouched, especially beneath modern roads and parking areas. Approximately seven-eighths of the sites of the two stone forts are unexcavated, while 100% of the wooden Fort Charles (1677-89) has yet to be investigated. Thus, while much is known about Pemaquid's structures and associated artifacts, much has been preserved and will continue to be preserved. The repeated rises and falls of the Anglo-American settlements and forts at Pemaquid mirror in a microcosm the tragic clash of the British and French empires on both sides of the Atlantic. They also represent the ever-evolving relations between Anglo-Americans and Native Americans, involving peaceful fur trading punctuated by tragic cycles of warfare and peace treaties. Pemaquid's history, in fact, is the sad history of Anglo-Native relations throughout the colonial period.

It is painfully easy to visualize a high-priced subdivision on the site ("Pemaquid Acres"), and this could so easily have been its fate. After all, until 1969 most of the designated land lay in private hands with no state or local restrictions at that time on its use. It is fortuitous that promotion of the site of the forts at the turn of the century and excavations in the site of the settlements in the 1960s each led to cumulative state ownership of most of the peninsula. Disturbance of soil on the site is prohibited by both state law and regula-

tions. Mother Nature, however, respects only the laws of nature, and here the site is facing a severe threat. Land subsidence and rising sea levels, coupled with the exposed nature of the site, are causing serious erosion on the site of the settlements adjacent to the harbor. In 1968, when I was drawing plans of several of the settlement's 17th-century foundations, I noticed that the edge of the bank nearest Structure 10 was about 25' distant, well beyond a line of spruce trees. The approaching bank has since killed the trees, and it lies within 10' of the structure, which may well be Pemaquid's oldest, the cellar of a half-timbered, wattle-and-daub dwelling of the 1620s.

*Interpretive signage at Colonel Pemaquid State Park.*



*Photos by Robert S. Grumet.*

*The author at foundation of a Pemaquid structure.*



# **Archeological National Historic Landmarks**

## **A Nationwide Sampler**

Abbott Farm Historic District, Mercer County,  
New Jersey

Accokeek Creek Site, Prince Georges County,  
Maryland

Angel Mounds, Vanderburgh County, Indiana

Appalachicola Fort Site, Russell County,  
Alabama

Awatovi Ruins, Navajo County, Arizona

Aztalan, Jefferson County, Wisconsin

Bent's Old Fort, Bent County, Colorado

Big and Little Petroglyph Canyons, Inyo  
County, California

Big Hidatsa Village Site, Mercer County,  
North Dakota

Blood Run Site, Lyon County, Iowa

Cahokia Mounds, St. Clair County, Illinois

Clover Site, Cabell County, West Virginia

Cocumscussoc Archeological Site, Washington  
County, Rhode Island

Crow Creek Site, Buffalo County, South  
Dakota

Danger Cave, Tooele County, Utah

Deer Creek Site, Kay County, Oklahoma

El Cuartelejo, Scott County, Kansas

Etowah Mounds, Bartow County, Georgia

Folsom Site, Union County, New Mexico

Fort Christina, New Castle County, Delaware

Fort Hall, Bannock County, Idaho

Fort Michilimackinac, Cheboygan County,  
Michigan

Fort Rock Cave, Lake County, Oregon

Fort Western, Kennebec County, Maine

Graham Cave, Montgomery County, Missouri

Grand Village of the Natchez, Adams County,  
Mississippi

Horner Site, Park County, Wyoming

Indian Knoll, Ohio County, Kentucky

Ipiutak Site, Point Hope Peninsula, Alaska

Kathio Site, Mille Lacs County, Minnesota

Lamoka, Schuyler County, New York

Leonard Rockshelter, Pershing County,  
Nevada

Marmes Rockshelter, Franklin County,  
Washington

Mashantucket Pequot Indian Reservation  
Archeological District, New London  
County, Connecticut

Moccasin Bend Archeological District,  
Hamilton County, Tennessee

Nauset Archeological District, Barnstable  
County, Massachusetts

Ninety Six and Star Fort, Greenwood County,  
South Carolina

Parkin Indian Mound, Cross County,  
Arkansas

Pictograph Cave, Yellowstone County,  
Montana

Plainview Site, Hale County, Texas

Poverty Point, West Carroll Parish, Louisiana

Printzhof, Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Puukohola Heiau, South Kohala District,  
Island of Hawaii

Serpent Mound, Adams County, Ohio

Signal Butte, Scottsbluff County, Nebraska

Thunderbird Archeological District, Warren  
County, Virginia

Town Creek Indian Mound, Montgomery  
County, North Carolina

Windover Archeological Site, Brevard County,  
Florida

Information on these and the more than 150 other National Historic Landmarks primarily designated for their archeological values can be obtained by writing to Chief, National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.



Each year, according to law, the Secretary of the Interior reports to Congress on threats to National Historic Landmarks nationwide. Each year, every State Historic Preservation Officer supplies up-to-date data on the status of threatened Landmarks to the Secretary to assist in this process. And each year Maine's State Historic Preservation Officer has reported on the threat which coastal erosion poses to Colonial Pemaquid. It can only be hoped that the Landmark status in the near future will directly (through a special appropriation, for example) or indirectly (through heightened awareness of the site's significance on the part of non-federal funding sources) lead to effective erosion control measures.

Each year, thousands of people from across our country and from many foreign nations visit Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site to walk among the excavated, stabilized, and interpreted structures, to climb the steps of the reconstructed stone bastion, and to pass through the on-site museum. Some are casual tourists. Others are maintaining a Pemaquid tradition dating from the

earliest days of the settlement: they are launching their boats to go fishing. Still others are students of historical archeology, who know before they even enter the park that they will see structures and artifacts which span virtually the entire period of the Thirteen Colonies. Wherever they are from, if they are researching Anglo-American sites of the 17th or 18th centuries, Pemaquid is likely to help them. For that reason alone, America is fortunate that the repeated destructions and abandonments of Pemaquid in the Historic Contact period ironically contributed to the site's archeological preservation. Exactly 200 years ago the significance of the site's history and its remains were first recognized. It can only be hoped that 200 years from now the significance of the Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site National Historic Landmark will be equally recognized and that there will still be intact archeological deposits to preserve.

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Paul R. Huey

## The Fort Orange and Schuyler Flatts NHL



*Detail of the ruins of the Schuyler house. Photo by Paul R. Huey taken after the 1962 fire.*

**T**wenty-five years ago in the Hudson Valley of New York State there began a series of unprecedented archeological discoveries in historic sites. These discoveries opened a window of knowledge into the earliest period of that area's historic Dutch settlement, known previously only through an incomplete documentary record as well as through many traditions. Public interest and excitement were intense as the remains of an ancient, almost mythical, historical past suddenly became a physical reality as the result of a new initiative in archeological research.

Flowing to the Atlantic Ocean for hundreds of miles and cutting through the eastern Appalachians, the Hudson/Mohawk River system is unique in North America. The Hudson, a tide-

water river reaching inland for more than 150 miles to the point where it joins with the Mohawk, provided an access deep into the North American continent and naturally attracted trade-oriented Europeans such as the Dutch early in the 17th century. Near the present city of Albany, New York, the Dutch established a small fort in 1614 to trade for furs with the Indians, but this installation was replaced in 1624 with a new post, Fort Orange, built some distance away. New Amsterdam was established in 1626 at the mouth of the Hudson and later became New York City. After 1630, farming and agricultural settlements were developed under the direction of Kiliaen van Rensselaer in the fertile valley area around Fort Orange, independent of the West India Company fur trade at the fort, and a small village that grew up adjacent to Fort Orange was officially set up as